



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Margie A. Emmermann:

Good morning,

Ahh...it's springtime in Arizona! Nature is in full bloom and the weather is amazing. If you are looking for some family activities during spring break, this a great time to experience some of our state's exhilarating outdoor adventures such as hiking, biking, mountain climbing, or just relaxing and taking in the scenic views.

In addition, Arizona's wildflowers are beginning to bloom. March and April are the ideal months to enjoy the variety of wildflowers that decorate the desert floor. Each year thousands of people travel to our [State Parks](#), cameras at the ready, to capture the natural beauty of these wildflowers on film.

Don't miss out on all the opportunities to get outside and explore Arizona!

For ideas on what to see and do, visit www.arizonaguide.com.

Have a great week!

AOT News

New Updates to AOT's Research Web site!

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [Lodging Performance 4th Quarter 2008](#)
- [Lodging Performance 4th Quarter 2008 \(By County\)](#)
- [Lodging Performance January 2009](#)

- [Lodging Performance January 2009 \(By County\)](#)
- [Bed Tax Rates February 2009](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Beth Billings, Research Specialist, at 602-364-3689 or via e-mail at bbillings@azot.gov.

Heat up Arizonaguide.com and Post Your Summer Specials Online

The days are getting longer and the temperatures are getting hotter, which can mean only one thing – summer is almost here! Don't miss the chance to post your summer deals on AOT's consumer Web site, www.ArizonaGuide.com under the "Travel Deals" section. Here, visitors will have the opportunity to view a listing of special deals and packages by clicking on "Summer Specials."

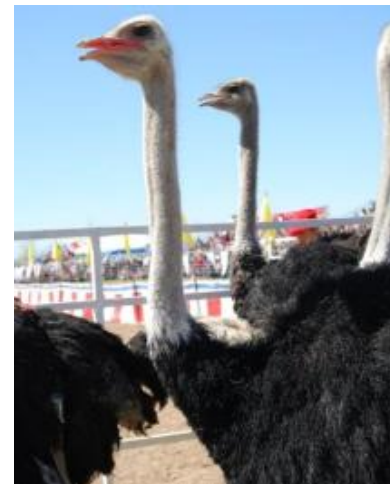
If you are a supplier, you may directly post tourism related specials, discounts or packages by visiting www.azot.gov and clicking on Travel Deals. There is no charge to list a package on the Travel Deals section. If you have questions or need additional assistance, contact Marjorie Magnusson at 602-364-3695 or via e-mail at mmagnusson@azot.gov.

Event Profile

Chandler 21st Annual Ostrich Festival March 13-15, 2009

Ostrich ranching was once a prominent part of life in Chandler. Chandler and Maricopa County led the nation in raising ostriches for their stylish and expensive plumes. To celebrate the city's rich history as well as provide a first-class community event, the Chandler Chamber of Commerce created the Ostrich Festival in 1989.

This month, the city will celebrate the 21st Annual Ostrich Festival, a festival that offers a place to experience, eat and purchase all things Ostrich!



The Chandler Chamber of Commerce is partnering with a new producer for the '09 event, Universal Fairs from Memphis, TN. Universal Fairs and the Chandler Chamber are keeping admission prices the same for this year's event and adding about twice as many attractions! >>

Read Full Story

Ostrich Alley has carved ostrich and emu eggs, feathers, stuffed animals, and other souvenirs. Visit with Ostival and TuTu LaPlume, the festival mascots. Try an Ostrich Burger, Ostrich Jerky and fresh Emu Eggs.

The festival will provide live entertainment on two stages. The Community Stage features local groups such as, school music groups, dance troupes, and karate demonstrations. The Main Stage provides nationally known headliners each night.

If chills and thrills are your idea of entertainment the festival offers a large carnival where you can experience state fair size rides, including traditional favorites. Let your kids bounce, crawl, run, and jump at Kids Zone, a place that's just for children. Kids Zone has the latest inflatable toys and bounces, a petting zoo, pony rides and other fun activities for the younger event goer.

The Ostrich Festival will feature Ostrich Races, an Exotic Petting Zoo, Pig Races, a Sea Lion Show, a Muscle Car Show, a Demolition Derby, Amateur Boxing, a Thrill Circus (including the Globe of Death), Jest in Time Family Circus, Medieval Jousting, an additional live ostrich display and THREE stages of live entertainment, ALL included in admission price.

Friday, March 13th will feature country singer Mark Chesnutt at 7 p.m. and classic rock band Foghat at 9 p.m., Saturday, March 14th will feature Starship starring Mickey Thomas at 9 p.m. and Food City Fiesta Sunday, March 15th will feature The Grass Roots at 4 p.m., Sonora Skandalo at 6 p.m., and Tropicalisimo Apache at 8 p.m. Local tribute bands for the Beatles (AZ Beats) and Led Zeppelin (Heartbreaker) will also perform. The Chandler Ranch Stage is new to the festival this year and will feature great local bands including a Phoenix Blues Society Showcase, and will turn into a dance party after dark each night. The Community Stage will feature local community groups including local dance schools and musical groups.

Event Details

When: March 13 – 15, 2009

Where: Chandler's Tumbleweed Park at the corner of McQueen and Germann (2250 S. McQueen Rd)

Admission: Discount tickets will be available at Bashas' and Food City with a \$1 discount on all general admission tickets. Family Fun Packs will be sold for \$62 (a \$20 savings) and include 2 adult, 2 youth and 2 all-day carnival ride passes. General admission at the gate will be \$9 for adults, \$8 for seniors and \$7 for youth (kids under 6 are free). Pre-sale tickets will also be available at www.ostrichfestival.com and at some Chandler Schools.

Parking: Parking will be reduced to \$5 for the 2009 event. Parking lot information can be found on www.ostrichfestival.com.

How to get there: Head south of the Loop 202 San Tan freeway at McQueen.

For more information: www.ostrichfestival.com

AOT Events

Golf Still a Passion for Canadian Travelers

The Arizona Office of Tourism exhibited at the 20th Annual Toronto Golf & Travel Show February 28-March 1. The annual golf expo is held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and typically attracts 30,000 Canadian golf enthusiasts. The more than 200 exhibitors this year included golf outfitters, equipment manufacturers and suppliers, golf schools, golf travel

companies and destinations. This year AOT distributed visitor guides, maps, special resort golf packages and other golf travel product. Xona Resort Suites in Scottsdale and the Yuma Visitor's Bureau were in attendance with Arizona to promote their golf specials as well.

It seems the economy hasn't dampened the enthusiasm to get in a game or two or 10 and it seems the Canadians want to go west! Certainly, the Accenture Match Play Championship taking place last weekend in Marana sparked a few inquiries over the course of the show. But, Arizona is already a popular golf destination for many as there were attendees planning their Arizona golf getaway in the near future or had just returned from their annual trip. There were a number, though, that had never been and Arizona has been a dream vacation for them as they have been going to Florida and Myrtle Beach for years – and they desire a change!

The demographic is primarily male at the show, but we saw several groups of ladies who were looking for getaways that included some serious golf opportunities as well as play time. And families were fitting their children with clubs and putting them in golf clinics – Arizona's future golf vacationers!

For further information please contact Jennifer Sutcliffe at 602-364-3693 or via e-mail at jsutcliffe@azot.gov.

Upcoming Events

Event – Southern Hospitality AAA/CAA FAM Tour

Date – March 19-22

Location – Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Tucson

Event – Arizona Road Show in Mexico

Date – March 23 – 27

Location – Mexico City and Guadalajara, Mexico

Event – North of the Border Press Trip

Date – March 30 – April 4

Location – Yuma, Ajo, Tubac, Tucson

Industry News

Industry Mounts Push-Back Agency Attacks on Meetings

The U.S. Travel Association joined with seven other travel industry organizations to battle what U.S. Travel President and CEO Roger Dow labeled as an "unprecedented crisis" in the travel, meetings and convention industry. Dow and Geoffrey Freeman, senior vice president-public affairs, outlined the partnership's strategy on Wednesday to counter the negative news and politicians' rhetoric against companies that hold meetings and sponsor incentive trips for top personnel.

While the initial target has been companies that received federal bailout money, the climate has affected events sponsored by firms that sought no government aid. Congress and the Treasury Department will be urged to accept the partnership's guidelines on conferences, events and

employee recognition, although the economic stimulus package requires the Treasury Department to define what amount of spending on meetings and incentive travel is "excessive." The partnership has proposed that yearly outlays on meetings and incentive trips could not exceed 15% of a company's annual sales and marketing expenses. (*A TA Special Report*; www.ajc.com/Business; www.Review-Journal.com/Business; www.BTN.com, 3/4)

The U.S. Travel campaign, "[Meetings Mean Business](http://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com)," is intended to push back against what the trade group calls the "political demonization" of business meetings and events. The campaign comes as companies--most of whom have not received taxpayer assistance--cancel thousands of meetings and events, often out of fear that they will be singled out by politicians. According to a new survey by Meetings and Convention Magazine, more than 20 percent of companies that have not received taxpayer assistance have canceled events due to recent media and political attention. "Our campaign will challenge policymakers to tone down the dangerous rhetoric, embrace sensible guidelines for companies receiving assistance and promote travel as an economic solution," said U.S. Travel President and CEO Roger Dow.

During a special conference call following last week's press briefing, Dow said the Meetings Mean Business campaign will use print advertisements and television spots using front-line hospitality employees who have been laid off or affected by the "thousands" of meetings and events that have been canceled due to companies' fears of being vilified in the mainstream press. Dow urged all members in the industry to take grassroots action in fighting the media and government backlash by using a new Website, www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com, and arming themselves with industry data and talking points about the benefits of the industry, as well as signing the Keep America Meeting petition, a separate but cooperative effort.

U.S. Travel is conducting the campaign in partnership with the American Hotel and Lodging Association, Destination Marketing Association International, International Association of Exhibitions and Events, Meetings Professional International, National Business Travel Association, Professional Convention and Management Association and SITE, formerly the Society of Incentive Travel Executives. (www.MiMegasite.com, 3/4; www.PRNewswire.com, 3/4)

Air Travel Falls Sharply

The world's 230 airlines have seen passenger travel fall sharply this year, as economic conditions worsened, an industry trade group said last week. Business and leisure travel fell 5.6 percent while air freight shipments dropped 23.2 percent, compared with a year earlier, the International Air Transport Association said. Airlines are responding to the slump by trying to shrink capacity. "So far, with the exception of U.S. domestic markets, they have been unsuccessful, IATA said in its latest Airlines Financial Health Monitor report. Separately, J.P. Morgan Chase said in a client note last week that passenger demand "has materially weakened" and that U.S. airline revenue for February and March is expected to drop 20 percent, and be down 14 percent in 2009. Airlines worldwide lost up to \$8 billion in 2008, more than the \$5 billion previously estimated, IATA said. (www.philly.com/Business)

Travel Industry Scrambles To Cope As Americans Spend Less

The sinking U.S. economy is forcing many Americans to cut back on or give up a hallowed tradition: the family vacation. A USA Today/Gallup Poll finds that 58 percent of people who normally take an annual vacation away from home will shrink their vacation spending this year -- or just not go. The finding mirrors a 2009 travel forecast newly issued by consultants D.K. Shifflet & Associates and IHS Global Insight, which research travel behavior monthly.

The firms forecast Americans will spend 9.7 percent less on leisure travel in April, May and June, and 9 percent less in July, August and September than in 2008. In sum, Americans could spend \$30 billion less on leisure trips this spring and summer. The travel industry sees the storm coming and is hustling to respond. For April, spring break time, airlines have scheduled 8.5 percent fewer seats than last April on domestic and international flights from the USA, according to OAG-Official Airline Guide. They've scheduled 8.4 percent fewer seats for June.

Survey: Global Hoteliers Expect a Tough Year Ahead For 2009

Hoteliers throughout the world are unanimously expecting declines in business performance for 2009 according to the Horwath HTL Global Hotel Market Sentiment Survey. In the face of the global economic downturn, says ehotelier, it is not surprising the results of Horwath HTL's survey indicate a tough year ahead in 2009. The survey ranked the global economic situation as the number one factor negatively influencing the market, followed by global stock market trends, and local economic trends.

Mr. Damien Little, a Director for Horwath HTL based in Asia says the timing of the first global sentiment survey was a little unfortunate given the current economic crisis. "The results are not unexpected and generally there are little differences across regions, however, the survey does highlight a few differences," said Mr Little. "However, I do think it sets up a good base of results for us to now compare the improvement in market outlook in the subsequent surveys we will be conducting."

General market sentiment was on the pessimistic side, with a global average score of negative 34.2. The only region to achieve a positive average sentiment score is South America, registering a score of 9.7. On the other hand, hoteliers in North America, which include markets hugely affected by the global economic downturn such as the USA and Canada, expected a relatively bleak outlook in 2009 as the region registered a sentiment score of negative 41. Asian hoteliers held the most pessimistic outlook for the year with an overall average sentiment score of negative 41.2 with Japan (-74.1), Singapore (-64.3) and Hong Kong (-52.7) the most pessimistic in the region.

Airlines Expected To Make It Through 2009

MSNBC reports that plunging airline stocks suggest investors worry a few carriers may wind up in bankruptcy, victims of the country's financial crisis. Analysts say there's no immediate danger of that for any major carriers, although it could be the fate of one or two by this time next year if credit markets stay tight or the economy weakens further.

Tempe, Ariz.-based US Airways Group Inc. is considered the most vulnerable among legacy carriers, according to analysts. American Airlines, a unit of Fort Worth, Texas-based AMR Corp., also faces some financial headwinds given its debt obligations and how much cash it is currently expected to end the year with heading into next winter, a typically slow season. Seattle-based Alaska Air Group Inc., Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines Inc. and Houston-based Continental Airlines Inc. are considered by analysts to be in stronger financial positions.

Marketers Adapt As Social Networks Attract Older Users

Sometime in 2007, says Advertising Age, the recent grads that made up the core of Facebook came to a doleful realization: Yup, mom and all her friends are on Facebook. The following year it got worse: The once-exclusive club of the young was completely infiltrated by colleagues, bosses, neighbors and others who might not be amused when little Johnny gets tagged in a photo getting totally ripped with his pals.

Social networking is no longer a youth phenomenon. As Facebook marches toward 52 million U.S. users (170 million worldwide), the site is beginning to look like, well, America. Which is to say, it looks a lot older. As of January, more than 50 percent of Facebook users and 44 percent of MySpace users in the U.S. were over 35 years old, according to ComScore estimates. The single biggest age demographic in the U.S. on both Facebook and MySpace is now between 35 and 44. Indeed, Facebook says its fastest-growing demo is 55-plus.

That's to be expected, and largely due to the fact that both Facebook and MySpace don't have a lot of growing room left among the younger set. According to Pew Internet and American Life data, 75 percent of online adults 18-24 already have a profile on a social network. "For those to grow, they'd have to have aged," said Deep Focus CEO Ian Schafer. "It's from growth and expansion to ubiquity."

U.S. Social Network Users To Grow 44% By 2013

The number of people in the U.S. who use social networks at least once a month will increase 44 percent to 115 million in 2013 from 79 million in 2008, according to a new eMarketer report. With use already high among teens and young adults, growth will come from boomers, Generation X and tweens.

The research firm estimates that the number of children aged 3 to 11 on social networks will grow 61 percent in the next five years, adults 18 and over, 49.5 percent, and teens, 20.1 percent. The overall U.S. social networking population will grow 11 percent to 88.1 million in 2009.

MySpace says it already has 130 million users worldwide, including 76 million in the U.S. Facebook says it has more 175 million active users, 70 percent of which are outside the U.S. Facebook has been growing at a torrid pace lately, adding new users at a rate of about 600,000 a day.

Social networking trends highlighted by [eMarketer](#) for this year include the expanding user demographics, rising engagement, the impact of mobile social networking and Twitter, and whether the rapid growth of Facebook in the second half of 2008 will continue.

Practical Is The New Luxury

Major companies are canceling meetings worth hundreds of thousands of dollars - not because of costs but because of appearances says HotelNewsResource. James Tisch, CEO of Loews Corp., says Congress is 'killing the resort hotel business' as companies cancel meetings and conferences to avoid any whiff of extravagance that may trigger the government's ire. Also called "the AIG Effect" (named for the insurance company that made headlines last fall for spending on a lavish spa retreat after receiving federal bailout funds), companies are shifting travel down-market or eliminating it altogether. But now hotels are challenging the impression that business meetings are wasteful. In their support we found that hotels are in fact more 'practical' than ever before. The latest MMHI results offer evidence that hotels are not piling on excesses, but are providing a good value and are responding to the economy with reasonableness and practicality.

Legislature to Make State's Nickname Official

Like a longtime couple that finally decide to make it legal, the Arizona Legislature is on the verge of making "the Grand Canyon State" the official state nickname.

Arizona has been known as the Grand Canyon State for decades: The Canyon was here long before Arizona was a state, and the state Office of Tourism's Web site boldly proclaims that Arizona is the Grand Canyon State.

House Bill 2019 would make that nickname official. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Sam Crump, R-Anthem, is before the House Government panel at 2 p.m. today. If approved, it would join a growing list of other "official" items, from the state tree (the paloverde) to the state neckwear (the bola tie). It should be an easy vote, unlike the tortured path that gave us the official state butterfly (the two-tailed swallowtail). *(By Mary Jo Pitzl, the Arizona Republic, March 3, 2009)*

Three Arizona Events Selected as “Best Western” Events

American Cowboy magazine announced the results of its second annual Readers’ Choice Awards for Best Western Events. The winners appear in the April/May issue and on the magazine’s website, www.americancowboy.com. This year, close to 1,000 readers participated in the online poll, selecting their favorite Western events held in the United States and Canada.

“The Readers’ Choice Awards symbolize a stamp of approval straight from our readers,” said Bill Garrels, publisher of American Cowboy. “They celebrate the events that really stand out as crowd pleasers, and help give them the national recognition and acclaim they so richly deserve. The awards are also a great way for folks to discover and attend events they may not otherwise have known about.” Voting participants in the poll were able to select their favorite events from a roundup of 148 editor selected nominees in ten different categories, including Best Rodeo Event, Best Family Event, and Best National Day of the American Cowboy Event, among others. Write-in votes were also allowed. “We’d like to congratulate the winners and thank all our readers who voted for the events that they feel are deserving of this prestigious award,” Garrels added.

Below are three categories the Arizona events were awarded. The events are listed in order by number of votes received.

Best Heritage Event

- 1: The Spirit of the West Festival, Sioux Falls, SD
- 2: **Prescott Frontier Days, Prescott, AZ**
- 3: Bishop Mule Days, Bishop, CA

Best Art Event

- 1: Cheyenne Frontier Days Western Art Show and Sale, Cheyenne, WY
- 2: **Cowboy Artists of America, Phoenix Museum of Art, Phoenix, AZ**
- 3: C.M. Russell Auction and Exhibitors’ Show, Great Falls, MT

Best Music Event

- 1: CMA Music Festival, Nashville, TN
- 2: **Tombstone Western Music Festival, Tombstone, AZ**
- 3: Country in the Rockies, Steamboat Springs, CO

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!